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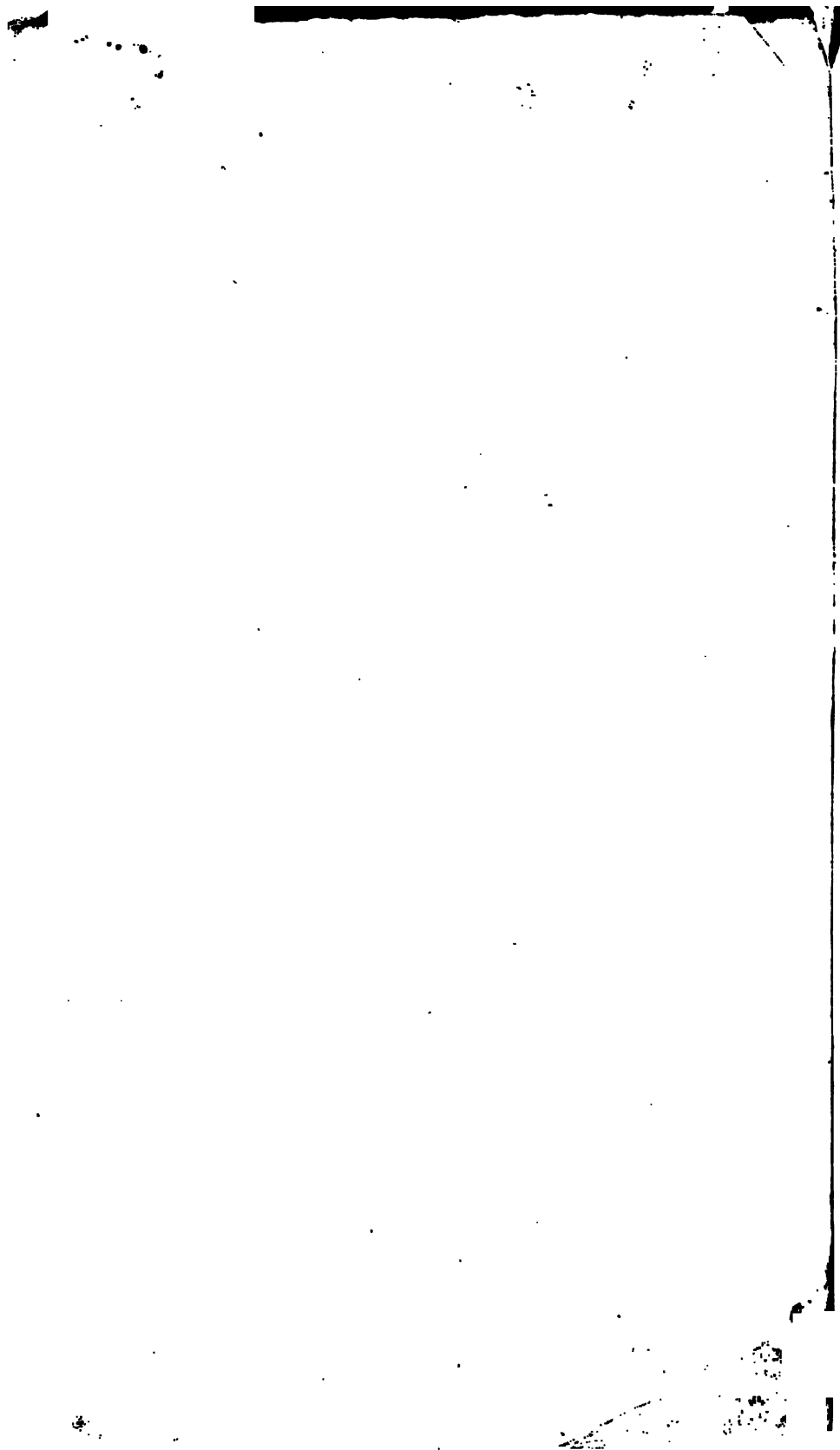


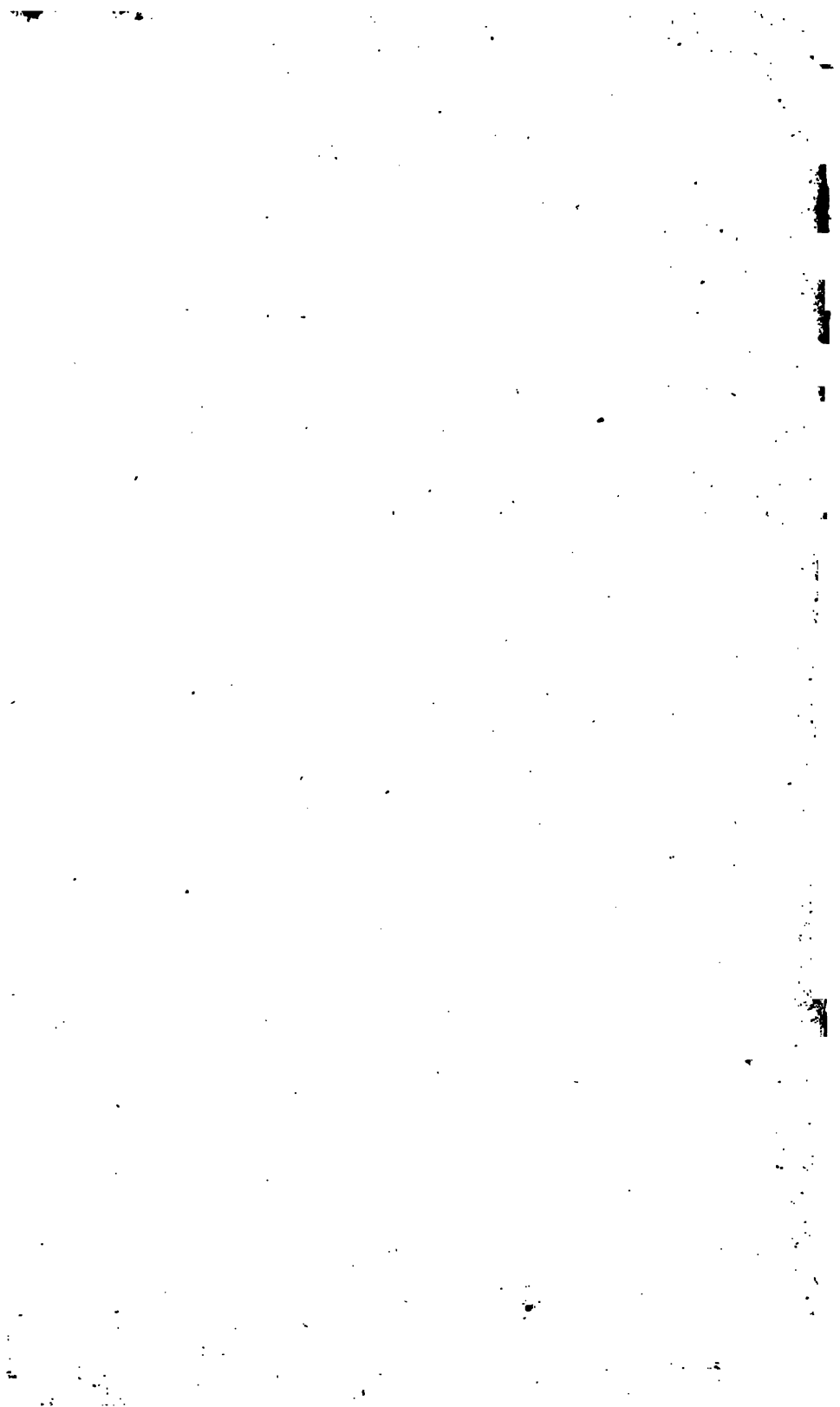
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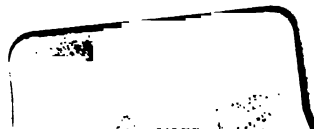
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THE
Patriot Father.

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THE
PATRIOT FATHER,

A Play
IN FIVE ACTS;

FREELY TRANSLATED
From the German
OF
AUGUSTUS VON KOTZEBUE,
BY
FREDERIC SHOBERL.

TRURO;

**PRINTED AT THE CORNWALL GAZETTE OFFICE,
BY F. SHOBERL.**

1819.



TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
Viscountess Falmouth,
 &c. &c. &c.

A LADY

INFINITELY LESS DISTINGUISHED
BY THE ADVANTAGES OF RANK AND FORTUNE,
THAN ILLUSTRIOUS
BY VIRTUES WHICH RENDER HER A MODEL TO HER SEX IN THE
CHARACTERS OF WIFE AND MOTHER;

THIS PLAY,

EXHIBITING

A LIVELY PICTURE

OF

CONJUGAL AND MATERNAL AFFECTION,

IS DEDICATED,

WITH PROFOUND RESPECT,

BY HER LADYSHIP'S

MOST OBEDIENT

AND MOST FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE TRANSLATOR.

1000

1000

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

When I first determined to submit the following Piece to the public through the medium of the press, I had no intention either of announcing the name of the author, or of acknowledging my own share in the performance. My motives for the meditated suppression of these circumstances originated partly in the invectives of late years so lavishly bestowed upon KOTZEBUE, because the principal interest, in one or two of the plays by which his talents as a dramatist are best known in this country, is excited in favour of characters who have been guilty of deviations from the paths of virtue and honour. This charge of painting vice in amiable colours, chiefly founded on the pieces above alluded to, and also advanced against the celebrated *Robbers* by SCHILLER, has been extended to all the dramatic writers of their nation; so that it has become the fashion to condemn the whole German school as vicious and

immoral. In this proceeding there is about as much liberality, as if foreigners were to select certain indecent passages which occur in our own Shakspeare, or some of the loosest productions of Otway, or Congreve, and on their account to brand the drama of England with the characters of licentiousness and obscenity. It was my wish that the reader should peruse *the Patriot Father* without any prejudice of this sort upon his mind, and form his judgment of it from its independent, intrinsic merits. A second motive that seemed to render concealment desirable, arose from the circumstances under which my task was executed. Undertaken, as it was, for amusement, and performed in brief intervals snatched from unremitting and laborious literary avocations, mostly while seated at the breakfast or tea table, I am but too sensible of the imperfections of this translation, or rather adaptation—for I have not scrupled to omit, to add, or to alter,* wherever the original seemed

* I have not been afraid to take the same liberty even with the title, which, in the original is: *Die Hussiten vor Naumburg*—literally, "The Hussites before Naumburg."

to be susceptible of improvement, or not congenial to English taste and feelings. For this reason I should rather have wished my share in the work to remain unknown. One consideration, however, was powerful enough to induce me to forego this intention of concealment. I have seen how unmercifully this very KOTZEBUE has been plundered by persons who have not hesitated to appropriate to themselves the credit to which he is entitled. I could mention a piece of his, produced two or three seasons ago, at one, of our great national theatres, as avowedly the work of an English dramatist of some celebrity; and I can assure Mr. Beazley that, notwithstanding the *Disguises* lately assumed by him at the English Opera House, the theft—for I cannot call it by any milder name—was but too apparent. The conduct of these persons reminds me of the lines of the late Mr. Holcroft, in which he represents our immortal Shakspeare reclining in profound and peaceful slumber,

While all his elves and fairies round him play'd ;
 Voltaire approach'd, straight fled the frolic band,
 For Envy's breath such sprites may not endure ;
 He pilfer'd many a gem with trembling band,
 Then stabb'd the Bard to make the theft secure.

Somewhat similar has been the treatment experienced by KOTZEBUE.

With such examples before my eyes, I was fearful lest, if my participation in this performance should become known, my motives might be misconstrued, and I might be suspected, by persons to whom I am a stranger, of a design to defraud the original author of his due. To avoid so odious an imputation, and, if possible, to apply some corrective to the general notion of the immoral tendency of KOTZEBUE's plays, I cheerfully make the distinct avowal, that whatever of dramatic merit the PATRIOT FATHER shall be found to possess, belongs to him—but that I alone am responsible for the defects of style and language with which it may be disfigured.

The event upon which the author has constructed his plot, is supposed to have

▼

happened during those sanguinary hostilities which succeeded the treacherous sacrifice of **Huss**, one of the earliest of the German Reformers; whose countrymen, the Bohemians, rose in arms to revenge his death, and laid waste without mercy the adjacent provinces. It is a singular fact, that the appearance of this play produced a warm discussion among the literati of Germany, on the question, whether Naumburg * had ever been really threatened by the Hussites and delivered by the expedient here described, according to the received tradition, apparently confirmed by the customs practised at the festival called *Kirschfest* (Cherry-feast) still held there annually; or whether the whole story was to be considered as a fiction. In the investigation of this subject by Mr. C. P. LEPSIUS, in a small tract furnished me by the kindness of Mr. BÖRTIGER, of Dresden, (a gentleman equally distinguished for his talents as an archæologist and his patriotism as

* A town in Saxony, included in the late cessions to Prussia.

a Saxon,) that writer has brought forward strong grounds for inclining to the latter opinion.

Leaving the national writers to settle this disputed point, I shall merely subjoin one or two historical illustrations of that passage in the second Act, in which one of the Senators enumerates *liquid pitch* and *stones* among the means of defending the city against its assailants. Before cannon came into general use, it was not uncommon to resort to such expedients. WORB, a German writer, in his *History of Sagan*, informs us, that in 1428, when the Hussites menaced Görlitz, the most vigorous measures for defence were immediately adopted, and that among other precautions, fifteen brewing coppers were placed round the town within the ramparts, calculated to hold eighty stone of melted pitch, for the purpose of being poured upon the enemy if they should attempt to scale the walls.

Of the means of annoyance employed at the same period we find a curious elucidation in a contemporary historian of Bohemia, named

HAYECK. In 1422, the strong fortress of Karlstein, about 20 miles from Prague, which adhered to the Emperor Sigismund, was invested by the Hussites, chiefly with a view to obtain possession of the royal regalia deposited there—a possession to which, in the notions of those times, almost the virtue of legitimacy was attached. “The Burgrave of Karlstein, however,” says Hayeck, “secretly and expeditiously removed the crown to the Bavarian frontier town of Walhartitz, and calmly awaited the hostile force. The latter consisted of 24,000 men—a number unprecedented in that age—who brought with them four heavy cannon, and 49 smaller pieces of artillery. The army encamped on the surrounding hills, and not only kept up a violent cannonade against the fortress, but hurled into it stones, putrid carrion, and human ordure, which was brought from Prague in large barrels, and against the stench and noxious effluvia of which the besieged had no other means of defending themselves than by the use of unslaked lime. Above 1800 barrels

of such filth, and more than 10,900 balls were thrown into the fortress. The besieged, on their part, among other provocations, suspended a citizen of Prague, whom they had taken prisoner, by a cord from the principal tower, placed a long staff with a fox-tail fastened to it in his hand, and thus, to taunt the enemy, gave him the appearance of repelling their shot with a fly-flap. By their perseverance they at length exhausted the patience of the assailants, who retired without accomplishing their purpose."

Soliciting the reader's indulgence for this digression, I shall detain him no longer than to observe, that if this essay should be deemed too defective to deserve the public patronage, I shall be satisfied, if it facilitates to an abler hand the task of giving a suitable English dress to a piece, which seems to me, as well on account of the interest of the plot, as the admirable moral sentiments that it breathes, to be well worthy of an introduction to the British Stage.

F. S.

Truro, Nov. 17, 1818.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FREDERIC WOLF, *an artisan* }
THE BURGOMASTER }
1st SENATOR } *of Naumburg*
2d SENATOR }
3d SENATOR }
FIELDING }
GATE-KEEPER }
DOOR-KEEPER }
STRANGERS }
PROCOPIUS, *General of the Hussites*
HERALD
1st OFFICER
2d OFFICER
3d OFFICER
1st HUSSITE
2d HUSSITE
BERTHA, *wife of Wolf.*
WOMEN
REAPERS—TOWNSPEOPLE—CHILDREN—HUSSITES,
&c. &c.

THE
PATRIOT FATHER.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

*The Market-place of Naumburg. In the
back ground the Town-house with a flight of
steps in front. Time, sun-rise.*

*(Enter a company of reapers, male and female,
with reaping-implements, baskets of provisions,
&c. who cross the Market-place in their way to
work.)*

CHORUS OF REAPERS.

The sprightly lark proclaims the day
And calls us to the fields away,
Where the balmy breath of morn
Gently waves the bending corn.

Now with sickle and with scythe
Haste away each reaper blithe :
For our homes we feel no care,

Have we not left our { fathers } there?
 { mothers }
 { sisters }

(Towards the end of the song Wolf enters. He receives and returns their friendly salutations; and listens to them with evident delight. As they pass him in going, some of them shake him heartily by the hand. The music gradually dies away.)

WOLF. (*alone.*)

Yes, I do love the sounds of artless joy,
 Pour'd for the ample treasures Nature yields,
 When all the wide champaign a golden sea
 Of undulating ears, full-grain'd and low
 Depending tow'rd the teeming earth display;
 And to the grateful songs of busy reapers
 The glist'ning sickles are in concert plied.

I love too this deep silence and repose,
 This solemn stillness which pervades the town,
 When nought is heard but the shrill cricket's
 chirp,

Or the dull distant step—when nought is seen,
 Save here and there the furrow'd face of age,
 With spectacles on nose, from door or window
 Advanc'd with aspect wise to note the weather;

No playful children gambol in the street,
 They too are gone to glean the straggling ears.
 But when the welcome tones of vesper bell
 Summon at eve the sun-burnt reaper home
 From fields his toil hath bar'd—Ah! then 'tis
 sweet

To hear the jocund train with hearts elate
 Strike up the harvest-song—the brimming bowl
 They raise alternate to their thirsty lips,
 And sportive mirth and glee reign uncontroll'd.
 (*Exit.*)

SCENE II.

The outside of Wolf's Cottage.

WOLF. (*to Bertha who meets him at the door.*)
 Stirring so soon?—I left thee fast asleep.

BERTHA.

I had been here ere this—but as thou know'st,
 Gustavus, little rogue, waits for thy rising,
 Comes creeping to me, nestles in my bosom,

And with his winning tricks beguiles the time,
Till sleep again seals up his laughing eyes.

WOLF.

It is a glorious morning, and but now
The jovial train of reapers pass'd our door,
Singing, as they tripp'd merrily along,
A sprightly tune.

BERTHA.

O yes, I heard it all.

WOLF.

And well may they rejoice, hath not the bounty
Of a kind Providence again bestow'd
A rich reward for all the farmer's toils?—
The golden sea as murmuring its waves
I' th' morning breeze—ah! 'tis a sight indeed
To make the heart glad!

BERTHA.

Mine would leap for joy,
Had we but fields to reap the produce of.

WOLF.

And so we have. Is not my shop my field,
Where ev'ry day I gather in fresh crops,
Reckless alike of seasons, storms and weather?

BERTHA.

'Tis so indeed my Frederic, but should sickness
Again o'ertake thee, and arrest thy labour—

WOLF.

Why then all-gracious Heav'n would give my
Bertha
Benevolent neighbours.

BERTHA.

But if, which God forbid, I were to lose thee,
What could I then do with eight starving
orphans?

WOLF.

Industrious habits and a name unstain'd
I leave my boys, and who possesses these
In Naumburg need not starve. If God doth
clothe

The lily of the field and feed the sparrow,
Surely my Bertha should not doubt his care.

BERTHA.

Nor do I Frederic—still I can't but think,
That the possession of a field or two
Would give more cheery prospects.

WOLF.

So, because
 Nor lands nor well-stor'd barns own me their
 master,
 Must I not bear a part i'th' general joy
 For this productive harvest?—Oh! my Bertha
 Content's a precious jewel and I possess it—
 While bounteous Providence preserves thee
 to me
 And the dear pledges of our mutual love,
 While it grants health and strength, a cheer-
 ful mind,
 A heart attun'd to others' joy and grief,
 What need I more to be supremely happy?

BERTHA.

'Tis just thy way—whatever chance betide
 Thou mak'st a source of joy.

WOLF.

Ruffle not then
 That sweet content which never so o'erflow'd
 My grateful heart as at this very moment,
 When all conspires to wrap my soul in bliss—
 The fragrant and refreshing breeze of morn—

The reapers' jovial strains—my native town,
 In whose dear bosom cherish'd, me the hand
 Of pow'r hath ne'er defrauded of the earnings
 Of patient industry—my little cot
 And cheerful garden, where eight chubby boys
 Await their father to the gay repast—
 And to crown all,—that fairest gift of Heav'n
 A wife, whose virtues and whose tenderness
 For fifteen years have been my daily solace!

(clasping her in his arms.)

BERTHA. *(wiping her eyes.)*

I know not how it is, but tears will ever
 Start in my eyes to see thee look so pleas'd,
 To hear thee talk so kindly—dearest! Frederic!

WOLF.

How well those tears become thee! On the day
 Which gave thy virgin beauties to these arms
 Thou didst not look more lovely!

(He presses her to his bosom. The alarm-bell is suddenly heard.)

Ha!—What's that?

BERTHA.

Th' alarm-bell, as I live!

WOLF. (*looking round.*)

Some fire, no doubt,
Is raging in the town.

BERTHA. (*looking anxiously about*)

I can see nothing of it.

WOLF. (*walking away to a little distance.*)

It is no common accident—else why
So loud?—why so impetuous?

BERTHA.

Ah! Frederic
Don't leave me thus!

WOLF.

Bertha, where are the children?

BERTHA.

They're safe within.

WOLF.

Then go thou to them, dear,
And send them quickly out to play i'th' meadow,
While thou and I run to assist our neighbours.

BERTHA.

Let me first look to our own—

WOLF.

We've not much

To lose—my tools are speedily remov'd.

(Looking towards the bell-tower.)

Ring on—ring on— as thou would'st wake the
dead!—

And yet I see no fire.

BERTHA.

What can this mean?

WOLF.

Stop, here comes neighbour Fielding, pale and
breathless.

(Fielding enters and hastily crosses the stage.)

Why this alarm, good master Fielding, say?

FIELDING. *(out of breath.)*

The foe—is at our gates!

WOLF.

The foe?—What foe?

FIELDING.

The Hussites, Wolf! *(Exit.)*

WOLF. *(much agitated.)*

Pray Heav'n it be not so!

BERTHA. *(in great alarm.)*

Ah! God have mercy! If it be the Hussites,

'Tis over with us!

WOLF. (*assuming an air of composure.*)

Let us not give way,
 Dear Bertha, to unreasonable fears!
 Fielding is credulous and I must confess
 The more I think, the more improbable
 The story seems to me.

SCENE III.

The Market-place.

*(A troop of Reapers rush upon the stage. The
 terrified towns-people assemble from all quarters.)*

REAPERS.

Woe to us all!

WOLF.

What mean ye?

REAPER.

At our gates
 The Hussites are arriv'd.

WOLF.

How can this be?
 Is not our brave Elector with his army

Posted at Leipzig, to obstruct the march
Of these marauders?

REAPER.

Sha'nt we trust our eyes?
The hills are cover'd with their arm'd battalions,
And flight alone can save us from their vengeance!

*(The Burgomaster enters, attended by several of
the Senators.)*

BURGOMASTER.

Whither away, my friends? what means this
tumult,

This strange confusion?— Am I yet in Naumburg?

Are these my fellow townsmen, who were wont
To meet all dangers cool and unappall'd?

REAPERS.

The Hussites! Sir! the Hussites!

BURGOMASTER.

Let your fears
Not gain th' ascendant of your better judgment:
Ye know that the Elector hath assembled
A gallant army on the plains of Leipzig,

Five thousand horse and thrice five thousand
foot;

That Margrave Frederic of Brandenburg,
Duke William too and Magdeburg's archbishop
Have joined him with their troops—what then
have we

To fear with such a force?

REAPER.

Alas! these eyes
Have seen

BURGOMASTER.

What have they seen?

REAPER.

The standards of the Hussites on the hills,
Their glitt'ring helmets and a forest wide
Of lances—

BURGOMASTER.

But, friend, why may'nt these be Saxons?
Perhaps th' Elector? If it should be so,
What shame it were to Naumburg to be found
So pusillanimous. Then courage, townsmen!
I've sent out messengers to learn the truth
Of this affair—till their return be tranquil.

REAPERS.

(Re-enter some of the Reapers with two Strangers)

Your honour would not credit our report,

Now hear the testimony of these men.

BURGOMASTER.

Whence come ye, friends?

STRANGER.

From Gleina near to Zeitz.

BURGOMASTER.

What know ye?—speak!

STRANGER.

Th' Elector is defeated, and his army

Dispers'd in flight. Like to the ocean waves,

The Hussite force, full sixty thousand strong,

Pour'd o'er the mountains—villages laid waste

And smoking hamlets mark'd its dread career.

At length at Altenburg the Saxons met

Th' invading foe, but there, o'erwhelm'd by num-

bers,

The bloody field their carcasses bestrew'd.

The fury of the victors knew no bounds:

The barns stor'd with the produce of the year,

The mansions, cottages and sacred temples

Alike were wrapp'd in all-devouring flames,
Nor sex, nor age, nor rank the hell-hounds
spar'd.

Such were the scenes that track'd their progress hither,

And now the storm is gather'd o'er your heads.
These eyes beheld promiscuous ruin burst
Over our churches, farms and peaceful cots,
Our innocent infants bleed beneath the knife
Of sacrilegious butchers—and ourselves
Have scarce escap'd with life to bring the tidings.

THE PEOPLE.

Woe to us! woe!

BURGOMASTER.

Shame on these cries! Straight send the women home!

I would consult with men!

(The sound of a distant trumpet is heard.)

What can that mean?

FIRST SENATOR.

Be not afraid, the gates are all secured!

BURGOMASTER.

Beshrew me, friend! thou might'st well spare
such comfort:

'Tis conscience that makes cowards—Is it gates
Or walls of adamant can give the sense
Of safety to the villain?—while the man,
Whose heart attests his duty well perform'd,
Fears but his God and knows no fear besides.

GATEKEEPER (*enters.*)

A herald at the gate demands admittance.

BURGOMASTER.

Conduct him hither. Fellow citizens,
Listen with calmness to this messenger;
Let not unmanly terrors or defiance
Be printed on your brows: tranquil and grave
And silent as your walls attend his errand,
And let your magistrates—if need be—answer.

THE HERALD (*enters.*)

Be welcome here—if thou'rt a messenger
Of peace, we bid thee welcome.

HERALD.

Not peace but curses have I to denounce
Against your city—men of Naumburg hear!
Procopius, the Bohemian prince, my master,
Through me informs you why Almighty
geance

This day pours out its chastisements upon you ;
Collect ye then around me, list and tremble.

BURGOMASTER.

We tremble not, ev'n 'fore his pow'r who
made us,
For he is merciful—but, to thy business.

HERALD.

Ye've heard how late there liv'd at Prague
a man,

Nam'd Huss, endued with wisdom to detect
The craft of Romish priests, and separate
Their idle legends from the word divine,
Which fearlessly he taught—The Roman pontiff
For this declar'd him excommunicate.
The Fathers of the Church, at Constance met,
Summon'd him thither to defend his doctrine,
Before their council—cheerful he obey'd
Nor aught solicited but a safe-conduct
From Emperor Sigismund—

(raising his voice.)

Now mark me well,
Ye men of Naumburg! Emperor Sigismund
Gave such safe-conduct to the pious Huss—

To Constance he repair'd, but in despite
 Of the imperial pledge, loaded with chains,
 Consign'd to loathsome dungeons long he languish'd,

Till at the stake at last his righteous spirit
 The martyr yielded up.— —We, his disciples,
 Have sworn us to avenge our master's murder
 With fire and sword—such is the vow we've
 ta'en.

Know too, ye men of Naumburg that your
 bishop

'Mongst the most furious of those foes was found
 Whose voice at Constance gave him to the
 flames.

Woe, then, upon your town and threefold woe
 Upon yourselves!—for thus the great Procopius,
 Our gen'ral, saith: "Thou, Naumburg, for the sake
 Of this participation of thy prelate,
 Shalt from the earth be swept and not one stone
 Be left upon another; that the spot
 Where dwelt the sanguinary mitred bigot
 May be marked only by the rank luxuriance
 Of nettles, thorns and briars. Yet farther!

Whatever lives or breathes within these walls,
 Or male, or female, age and infancy,
 The sword of vengeance shall exterminate.
 This very day the sun shall set in blood."
 I've done—prepare to die.

BURGOMASTER.

Herald, thou seest
 How on the faces of my towns-men round thee
 Pale horror sits, while shudd'ring at a deed
 In which they had no part: but me that death,
 So awfully denounc'd, surprizes not—
 We have been long familiar—therefore I
 First find my speech to answer. Say is't just
 That the son suffer for the parent's guilt?
 What crime have we committed? Full ten years
 The bishop's body moulders in the tomb.

HERALD.

As, then, we cannot call him to a reck'ning,
 We wreak our hate on you.

BURGOMASTER.

On harmless citizens,
 Whose ears the name of Huss hath scarcely
 reach'd?

Who, though adhering to our fathers' creed,
 Condemn no doctrine, persecute no faith,
 Desiring but that peace we leave to others?

HERALD.

All farther words were vain. Our gen'ral's
 sentence

Irrevocable cries—Death and Destruction !

BURGOMASTER.

Well it beseems the brave to practice mercy,
 To spare a peaceful people, who with joy
 Will from the produce of their fields and flocks
 Amply supply your camp.

HERALD.

All that we need
 Our swords procure.

BURGOMASTER.

The treasures of our churches,
 Whate'er of gold or silver our poor town
 Contains, shall be delivered faithfully.
 Myself will give th'example.

(Drawing a ring from his finger)

Take this jewel—

It is of value—but to me most dear

As the memorial of a parent's love.
Take it in pledge of our sincerity.

(Several of the women hastily take off their necklaces and other trinkets.)

ONE OF THE WOMEN.
Accept the willing sacrifice we offer.

HERALD.
'Tis vain—'tis blood we ask.

BURGOMASTER. *(after some pause)*
At least, permit
One of our number to attend you back
To the Bohemian camp: perchance his prayer
May touch your leader's heart.

HERALD.
I'll be no hindrance
Should one be found so bold.

BURGOMASTER.
Myself will go.

HERALD.
Consider well, old man—

BURGOMASTER.
Myself!

HERALD.

I will not answer for your safety,
Your blood might flow the first.

BURGOMASTER.

Let it!

WOLF (*advancing.*)

No, never
Shall such a precious life incur the risk!
If one the first in dignity of mind,
As first in office, leave the city now,
The common weal might suffer. God be prais'd,
There's not a man of Naumburg but with joy
Would in his stead accept the glorious mission!
And as kind fortune will'd that I the first
Should raise my voice, to me belongs the
privilege—
I'll to the camp!

BERTHA. (*in great agitation.*)

Wolf, art thou mad?

WOLF.

Cease, Bertha!

Worshipful Sir, a sweet presentiment
Lightens my heart, and a resistless impulse

Urges me to the trial. Gifted only
 With Nature's simple eloquence, yet oft
 Have my words fallen with persuasive force ;
 Trust therefore to—

BERTHA. (*with horror*)

Bethink thee of thy wife !

WOLF.

I must not now.

HERALD.

The fool ! he will repent it !

BERTHA. (*with increasing anguish*)

Think of thy children, Wolf !

WOLF.

And do I not ?

What heritage more precious can a father
 Bequeath his children than the fame of virtue ?
 Gold is soon spent—it passes to the stranger—
 A father's virtue is to them an heir-loom—
 A spark that in the bosoms of their offspring
 Kindles the genial glow of gen'rous pride,
 Which o'er all sordid passions lifts them high,
 And stimulates to deeds of deathless glory.
 Then let me go—no second lucky chance *

Might give me such a fortune for my sons.

BURGOMASTER.

Your noble actions, fellow-citizens,
Have ever been my pride—therefore with joy
I heard the offer of our worthy townsman.
Go! patriot, go! and may th'Almighty's blessing
Attend thy steps and speed thy safe return!

HERALD.

He'll ne'er return!

BERTHA. (*wringing her hands*)

Eight orphans, Wolf! eight orphans!

WOLF. (*pointing to the Burgomaster*)

Here is their father, Bertha.—Should my death
Avert destruction from my native town,
Then are they no more Wolf's but Naumburg's
children—

Or should my life be sacrific'd in vain,
I shall at least be spar'd the bloody scene
The setting sun shall witness.

(*To the Herald.*)

Come, I'm ready.

BERTHA.

Hast thou no farewell for a tender wife?

WOLF.

Farewel! be firm and weep not—now thou seest
How high I'd soar, draw me not down again!

BERTHA.

No blessing for thy boys, before thou leav'st them,
Perhaps for ever?

WOLF.

Cease, Bertha, cease
Thus to unman me—deeds not words bring
blessing.

(He walks hastily away with the Herald.)

BERTHA. *(running after him.)*

Stay, husband, stay.

BURGOMASTER. *(after an interval of silence.)*

Ye stand aghast, my friends, your bosoms heave
With sighs of mute despair but half repress'd.
Shake this despondence off!—consider well,
That nothing can avert the threaten'd ruin
But fortitude and courage!—above all,
Humble yourselves devoutly 'fore that Being,
Who for long ages hath been gracious to you,
Without whose leave no animated atom
Nor ev'n the meanest flow'r sinks into dust.

(To the Senators.)

Let us now proceed
Whither our duty calls us, to concert
What at our hands the public weal requires.

*(While the Senators, with the Burgomaster at
their head, slowly ascend the steps before the
Town-house, the people fall upon their knees.)*

CHORUS.

Jehovah ! at whose nod
Obedient lightnings to the skies return ;
Who, when the world of waters bursts its bounds,
Sendest thy storms to check its wasteful course ;
In our distress, O hear our fervent pray'r,
Abandon not thy people to despair !

ACT II.

SCENE I.

*(The Council-chamber in the Town-hall : in
the middle of it a table at which the Burgo-
master and Senators are seated ; before the ta-
ble a bar to exclude the populace. The first
Senator stands before an open window out of
which he is intently looking.)*

FIRST SENATOR.

Heavens ! what a concourse at St. James's Gate
 Of anxious burghers pouring from their homes !
 And ev'ry moment how the crowd augments !
 The street is fill'd with one vast moving mass—
 Now they begin like ocean waves to roll
 Back tow'rd the market-place—Ha ! is not that
 Our Wolf, who 'mid the thickest of the throng
 Bends hitherward his steps?—It is !—'tis he !
 But what a settled gloom upon his brow,
 As silently advancing 'mong his neighbours,
 He points significantly to our hall !
 He comes !—he comes !—but ah ! the citizens,
 Wringing their hands, interpret but too plainly
 The meaning of his silence.

(He returns to his seat at table.)

BERTHA. *(rushing hastily into the hall.)*
 He lives ! he is return'd !

BURGOMASTER.

What tidings brings he ?

BERTHA.

What care I, so I know my husband lives !

BURGOMASTER.

Woman, retire. Know too, this solemn place
Is to the public weal devote. No ear
Thou here canst find for private joy and grief.

*(Bertha timidly retires. The people enter
and advance, disregarding the bar. At length
Wolf appears.)*

THE PEOPLE.

He's come, but he says nothing!

BURGOMASTER.

Back, my friends,
Nor violate our ancient regulations;
In time of trouble, as in days of peace,
The law must exercise its wholesome rule.
(The citizens respectfully retire beyond the bar.)
Let Wolf alone advance.

(Wolf comes forward.)

Say, what have we to hope?

WOLF. *(in a low tone.)*

Were it not well these witnesses retir'd?

BURGOMASTER.

Come what come will, together we'll endure it!
The forest, where the huge oak's brawny arms

Defend its weaker neighbours, better braves
 The tempest's fury than the single pine
 That crowns the mountain's crest. Conceal-
 ment now

Availeth nought—speak, Wolf, without reserve !

WOLF.

Know then, most honour'd Sirs, that with the
 herald

Scarce had I scaled the heights, when suddenly
 The Hussite camp appear'd stretch'd out
 before me.

Like fretful waves impatient of restraint,
 Their dusky legions gird the mountain's base ;
 But their chief force upon the southern hill
 Is posted—and ten thousand busy hands
 Labour with works of art to fortify
 The steep ascent, already strong by nature.
 There a white tent, crown'd with a blood-red
 dome,

Rears high its haughty head above the rest ;
 O'er it the standard of the ruthless foe—
 A golden goblet in an argent field—
 Flouts the air proudly. The Bohemian general

Here keeps his martial state. Through the
long files

Of taunting guards, all men of hideous aspect,
With cheeks embrown'd, and grisly, matted
beards,

Distain'd by blood and dust, was I conducted
Into their leader's presence.

He sat surrounded by his officers,
While the grim executioner behind him

Brandish'd the gleaming axe as I approach'd.

"Why, wretch fool-hardy"—thus began Pro-
copius,

"What urges thee first of thy race to brave
The jaws of death?"—Nothing dismay'd, I said,

"We're both alike it'h' hand of the same God,
Be he the judge between a lowly man,

Impell'd by something here

(laying his hand on his heart.)

t' incur such risk,

And thee, the mighty ruler of this host."

BURGOMASTER.

How stomach'd he that answer?

WOLF.

Long he eyed me
 With look inquisitive from head to foot ;
 At last he sternly cried : " Stranger, proceed !"
 O'erjoy'd t' obtain a hearing I obey'd ;
 Spoke of our Bishop, who, a foreigner,
 Had not imbib'd his persecuting spirit
 Within our walls, and whom eternal justice
 Had long since summon'd to a strict account
 For his misdeeds.

Next I adverted to our peaceful town,
 Show'd how, contented with the humble fare,
 Of honest industry, we take no heed
 Of what befalls beyond our native hills ;
 Dwelt on our poverty, yet represented
 How cheerfully our little all we'd give
 To ransom our bare lives.—" I love thy blunt-
 ness,"

Replied Procopius, " in such wise as this
 None ever yet had courage to address me.
 Thou'rt safe—stay here—hence thou at night
 may'st view

The curling flames enwrap your guilty town."

"Nay, general," so I answer'd, "if thy heart
 Remain obdurate still, the only boon
 I fain would beg is—death—in mercy grant it!
 Then my closed eyes shall not behold the
 struggles
 Of my expiring infants, nor my ears
 Be harrow'd with the death-groans of their
 mother."

"Avaunt! he cried, flushed with infuriate rage,
 "Begone, presumptuous fool! return and tell
 Thy dastard townsmen that in vain they strive
 To wheedle me Ere yet the sun shall sink
 Behind yon hills, our fierce revenge we'll glut:
 The crackling flames shall dye the vault of
 Heav'n,

And not a wretch of your perfidious crew
 Shall greet the morning's dawn. As for thyself,
 Stir not again beyond the city walls,
 Or ling'ring torments, pangs yet undevis'd
 By cruelty ingenious, here await thee!"

Seiz'd, rudely dragg'd away, thrust from the
 camp,
 My homeward steps the soldiers' taunts pursued.

BURGOMASTER.

Thou hast redeem'd thy word—Accept our
thanks.

Good citizens retire, that we once more
In quiet may consult—but for the worst
Be ye prepar'd, and make your peace with
heav'n;

Resign yourselves to its severe behests,
Nor think ye of resistance.

FIRST SENATOR.

Heav'n and hell!
What? on our bosoms shall we fold our hands,
And gape for miracles?—No—no—to arms!
Now ev'ry hope is vanish'd show ye're men!
The resolution of despair gives strength
And oft works prodigies. Let us not heed
The coward counsel doting age suggests,
Whose snows each spark of courage have
extinguish'd.

Haste to the ramparts, then, brave men of
Naumburg,

Prepare for battle not for paltry plunder,
'Tis for our homes and families we fight!

That Pow'r who nerv'd a stripling's arm and
heart

To meet a giant's force still lives. Though
fiends

Num'rous as Ocean sands beset you round,
His hand can hurl destruction on their ranks

And blast their purposes. Away! Away!

Quick, carry fuel to the city walls,

Prepare your cauldrons, and of liquid pitch

Pour fiery torrents on th' audacious foe ;

And let your wives and children straight collect
Large store of stones to launch upon their
heads.

Snatch up what arms ye find--clubs--battle-axes,

Nay let the pitch-fork, sickle, flail, and scythe

Be in your vigorous hands death-dealing tools!

Now to the ramparts!—Should your spirits flag,

Think that your fathers, mothers, children,
wives,

Your sweethearts, home and country, life itself,

Are the dear stake ye fight for!

ALL THE PEOPLE. (*rushing out.*)

To arms ! to arms ! to arms !

(Wolf follows in silence, but stops when he has passed the bar ; one moment apparently sharing the general enthusiasm, and the next absorbed in profound thought.)

BURGOMASTER. *(after a pause.)*

What boots it that with unsubstantial hopes
We now delude the people!—O'er our heads
Heavy and black Heaven's awful judgments
gather ;
And from the murky bosom of the cloud,
That lowers big with death, too soon will burst
The fatal bolt to crush us !

SEVERAL SENATORS.

Alas ! alas ! 'tis true !

BURGOMASTER.

The people have retir'd, and now I dare
Acknowledge the despondence which pervades
My inmost soul. Bow'd with the weight of
years,
Bereft—so Fate decreed—of wife and children,
I love my towns-folk as my family:
In their prosperity my happiness
Is center'd—and the last remains of strength

I've cheerfully exerted in the office
 Which by their partial gift I hold—Yet now
 These aged eyes, alas! are doom'd to witness
 The ruin of the fabric rear'd of yore
 By our forefathers, which through various
 chances
 Hath flourish'd still, and which I fondly hop'd
 Might pass uninjur'd to posterity.
 O happy they who in the quiet grave
 Sleep the sound sleep of death!—they have
 been spar'd
 This hard probation; while in anger Heav'n
 Prolongs my wretched life!

FIRST SENATOR.

O chicken-hearted counsellors! if we
 Give up ourselves to the impetuous stream,
 As did our timid neighbours, we perforce
 Must be like them engulph'd. Who boldly
 buffets
 The stormy surge retains some chance of life.
 The worm is trampled on—not so the bee,
 The strongest shun its little venom'd shaft;
 And thus the firmness of th' infirm themselves

Oft gains respect from might. Take courage,
 then,
 We've solid walls, a broad deep ditch, strong
 tow'rs
 And an Almighty shield!

BURGOMASTER.

Hath he wrought wonders
 To save our neighbours? Are *we* more de-
 serving?

FIRST SENATOR.

Their want of spirit was the pregnant cause
 Of their perdition,

BURGOMASTER.

Fool-hardy daring is not courage, Sir;
 None but a maniac with his fists would strive
 To quell the fury of the hurricane.
 Four thousand men at arms our town contains—
 No more—now say how we with these can
 guard
 Th' extensive circuit of our walls and tow'rs,
 And duly man the various weaker points.
 Full forty thousand 'gainst us are encamp'd
 Upon the hills, with engines well provided

To force a ready entrance.—For relief
 That well ye know 'twere folly to expect,
 Th' Elector beaten and his force dispers'd,
 Himself shut up in Leipzig with the relics!
 What can we hope then from resistance?—He
 Who sendeth fearful storms to fertilize
 The drougthy earth, and by his lightnings
 gives

To the dull air new elasticity
 He—he alone, can change our foes' intent.

SECOND SENATOR.

Too true! indeed! too true!

FIRST SENATOR.

Would you then have us,
 Patient as lambs, present our naked throats,
 And lick the hand that wields the murd'rous
 blade?

BURGOMASTER.

On us it is incumbent
 As fathers of the city to protect
 The precious charge committed to our care,
 At ev'ry cost and ev'n of life itself.
 If then poor Naumburg's final hour be come,

Duty commands that to the fatal axe
 We first resign our necks. Let us go forth
 Clad in our robes of office. I will lead you.
 Our supplications shall obtain our peace,
 Or these gray locks be crimson'd with my blood.

FIRST SENATOR.

Now speak'st thou like a man—we'll follow thee.
(Wolf meanwhile whispers to the door-keeper)

DOOR-KEEPER.

Worshipful gentlemen, our townsman, Wolf,
 Desires once more admission to your presence,
 Having some weighty matter to propose.

BURGOMASTER.

Give him admittance.

WOLF.

Forgive me, Sirs, if a plain man presume
 In this extremity his mite to offer ;
 Good counsel may spring from the humblest
 source ;

A rugged shell oft holds the fairest pearl ;
 And virgin gold in common sand lies hid.

BURGOMASTER.

What hast thou to propose ?

WOLF.

In this necessity 'twere fit we risk
What's dearest to us for the public weal.

FIRST SENATOR.

Our lives !

WOLF.

No—what is dearer far—our children.

BURGOMASTER.

Explain thy meaning.

WOLF.

Ye would go forth yourselves—a resolution
Which well befits the fathers of the state :
But ah ! bethink you, when the shepherd's gone,
The flock is left defenceless—whilst your blood
Would only quench our last faint spark of hope.
The citizens, dishearten'd by your loss,
Would not know how to act or whom t' obey :
'Twere not judicious then to leave the town.

BURGOMASTER.

Say what is thy advice ?—The time is precious.

WOLF.

Let us collect our children, boys and girls,

From five to fourteen years of age, and send
them

Clad in white garments to the Hussite camp :
Let them march two and two, the youngest first,
Surround the gen'ral's tent, (which easily
May be distinguish'd by the floating standard)
Fall on their knees and raise their folded hands,
Cry—Mercy! mercy! nor desist till they
Have won that boon from the relenting foe.

BURGOMASTER.

How if his thirst of blood demand their slaughter?
ter?

WOLF.

Why, let them render up their guiltless lives
To him who gave them!—but woe to the
Hussites!

Then will the father feel a lion's rage,
Then ev'ry mother will become a tigress;
Together we will leave the dreary town,
Which childish prattle ceases to enliven,
And seek the spot dyed with our infants' gore—
There each will rise a hero—nay a god—

And in each mother's hand the peaceful resp-
hook

Gleam an avenging sword!

SECOND SENATOR.

Against a host like sand upon the shore
The conflict would be vain.

WOLF.

Ev'n were it so, bereft of that which gives
Its highest zest to life, how could we wish
Still to preserve it?

BURGOMASTER.

Methinks he hath advis'd us well.

FIRST SENATOR.

For me,
I can't approve his counsel.

SECOND SENATOR.

Our chief approves it—but he has no children,
To him it is an easy sacrifice;
Two darling boys like mine would work some
change
In his opinion.

FIRST SENATOR.

I have but one child,

The comfort of my life.

THIRD SENATOR.
I've three, and yet
Each is as dear as though the only one.

WOLF.

Forgive a smile that will not be repress'd—
Who is the richest here? who can, like me,
Summon eight hearty boys around his board?
And yet, believe me, if one single place
Out of the eight were at my table vacant—
Had I one portion less to deal, though earn'd
With toil severe, my well-known gaiety
Were fled—for ever fled! True, I am happy,
And as the richest parent in your town,
Have I not cause to be? when eight-fold joy
Beams from the blooming faces of my offspring.

(He steps to the door.)

Ho! hither, children!—Sirs, with your good
leave!

(His eight boys enter and surround him.)

See, here they are! Upon their glowing cheeks
Rude health is pictur'd. Judge ye for your-
selves

How happy such a sight must make a father!
 Their hearts are sound too. Come now, tell me,
 urchins,
 Which of you loves me best?

ALL. (clinging round him.)

I!

WOLF.

I told you so.
 I am the richest—yes, 'fore God!—the richest!
 Still I say:—Take them! 'tis the State demands
 The painful gift—take them! aye take my all!

SECOND SENATOR. (Rising)

I give my children too.

FIRST SENATOR. (Rising)

I'll not be worse than Wolf, my boy
 shall go.

THIRD SENATOR. (Rising)

So shall my three.

FOURTH SENATOR. (All rising)

'Tis fitting our example
 Dispose our fellow-townsmen.

BURGOMASTER.

O noble Wolf, receive our grateful thanks:

If, in this dire necessity, thy counsel
Procure relief, expect a rich reward.

WOLF.

If ye're deliver'd, and if these return
Unhurt, what greater, sweeter recompence
Can I desire? The very thought is bliss,
To which all earthly riches are but trash;
And when anticipation hath such joys,
What must be those, if Providence should pro-
per

Our enterprize, that will be his who plann'd it!

(Exit with the children.)

BURGOMASTER.

Well may a state exult whose ranks contain
Such patriot citizens! and we, 'fore Heav'n!
May deem us happy ruling such a town.
Colleagues, let us away, if not to share
The glory of the act, at least the care!

(Exeunt.)



A C T III.

SCENE I.

The Market Place.

BERTHA.

*(Coming out of her house, and looking anxiously
around.)*

Methought I heard the sound of lamentation
From distant female voices, intermix'd
With harsher tones of men—Again all's still !
How ev'ry noise alarms me ! If a door
But shuts or window rattles, how I start,
As though the final, dreadful hour were come !
Frederic, where art thou ?—Here am I alone—
Our neighbours' houses empty—not a soul,
Not one is left—it us'd not to be thus !
None but the happy ought to flee mankind,
For solitude is like the night, whose shades
Give double brilliance to the friendly stars,
But double horrors to the lightning's glare.

Wolf enters.

Art come at last, my husband ? Oh remove
The load of anxious care that racks my heart !

WOLF.

Courage, dear Bertha, courage!

BERTHA.

I heard confused murmurs—tell me, Wolf,
What they denote?

WOLF.

A patriot citizen
Proposed a last expedient.

BERTHA.

Say, what was it?
WOLF.

As it were vain to hope relief from force,
The man advis'd that we should try th' effect
Of feeble innocence, and send the children

BERTHA. (*In great alarm*)

Children!—what children?

WOLF.

All of proper age
Belonging to our town

BERTHA. (*With increased alarm*)

And ours too?

WOLF.

Certainly: when others give

Their bosoms' darlings, could ours be refus'd?

BERTHA.

All, sayst thou?

WOLF.

Yes, all of a certain age.

BERTHA.

Sure I've misunderstood!—Would ye send out
Our children to the Hussites?

WOLF.

Even so.

BERTHA. (*In extreme agitation.*)

Send them to certain death?

WOLF.

Forbid it Heav'n!

'Tis hop'd their artless innocence will touch
The barbarous invaders.

BERTHA. (*After a pause*)

A proposal!

Saidst thou not so?

WOLF.

I did.

BERTHA.

Indeed a shrewd one!

WOLF.

O how it glads me, Bertha, that so nobly
Thou keep'st the public interest in view !

BERTHA.

Why should I not ? though much I apprehend
Few of our burghers would—indeed the noise
I heard but now suffices to convince me
The well-meant plan has been rejected by them.

WOLF.

O no ! they hasten, on the contrary,
To execute it.

BERTHA,

What ! already !

WOLF.

Yes :
Our state admits not of delay.

BERTHA

The Burgomaster—
Doth he approve it ?

WOLF.

Certainly.

BERTHA.

He has no children—but the senators ?

WOLF.

Theirs are all going.

BERTHA.

Are they so indeed ?

And how behave the mothers ? what say they ?

WOLF.

Hear and take comfort in thine own distress
From the keen pangs that rack their tender
breasts.

No sooner was th' approval of the senate
Made public, than, with consternation fill'd,
Our matrons throng'd the streets: some on their
knees

Embrac'd their infants with convulsive throes—
Some sought their little ones lost in the crowd—
Some wearied heav'n with agonizing pray'rs—
While some scream'd forth the curses of de-
spair.

In vain their husbands by caresses strove
To pacify their rage. The meekest now
Became a fury. Breaking from the arms
Of spouses, fathers, brothers, quick they hied
To seek the magistrates. In vain their chief

Essay'd t' appease them: reckless of his office,
 His worth and rev'rend age, they fell upon him,
 And would have torn him piece-meal, had not
 we,

After fierce conflict, freed him from their gripe.
 The fitful fever of despair being past
 Nature resum'd her rights—from ev'ry eye
 A torrent burst—as when a sulph'rous cloud—
 Its fiery freight disgorg'd—refreshing show'rs
 Sheds o'er the parched plains. Mild Reason
 pour'd

Her soothing balm upon their wounded hearts,
 And bade them hope. Submissive to our fate,
 With silent tears, they lead their children home,
 To speed them for the camp.

BERTHA.

*(who has listened to his narrative with the most
 painful sympathy.)*

So soon ? to-day ?

WOLF.

Anon the drum will summon them together
 Here in the market-place.—Sooner, I ween,
 Their mothers had to stern necessity

Resign'd themselves, had but my dearest love,
 My noble, patriot wife, high-minded Bertha,
 Appear'd among them as a bright exemplar;
 For oft the tranquil greatness of one spirit
 Can awe the jarring passions into peace.

BERTHA.

Seek'st thou with empty praise to tranquillize
 This bursting heart? No more on't if thou
 lov'st me!

I'm neither man nor angel, but—a mother!
 I too can only execrate the fiend,
 Who this infernal project hath devis'd.
 He is no father—no—a father's joys
 He never knew—nor in his arms hath press'd
 A loving wife—nor dandled on his knee
 A darling babe!—name me the monster, Wolf,
 That I may curse him!

WOLF.

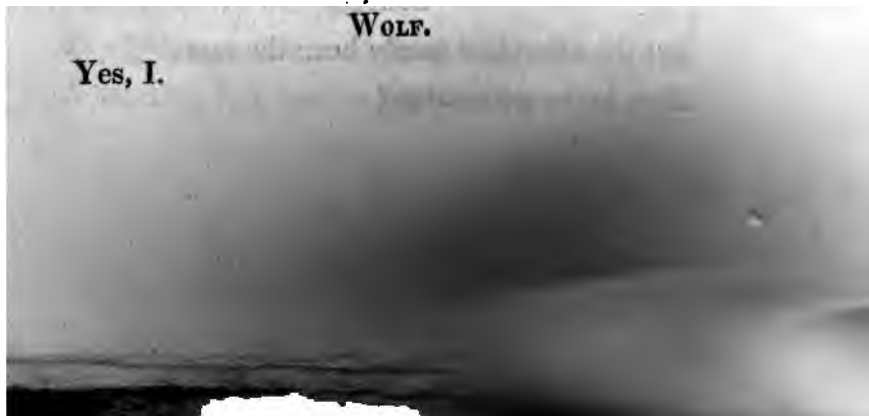
Behold him—here!

BERTHA. (*recoiling with horror*)

Thou, Wolf!

WOLF.

Yes, I.



BERTHA.

Thou—*father*—thou?

WOLF.

Condemn me not my love ;
In such a crisis, when our very lives
Are not our own, tell me, can there be aught
Too precious for a citizen to venture?
Or doth not duty bid him risk his all ?

BERTHA.

The *citizen*, I grant thee—but the *father* ?

WOLF.

He sends his children thither where alone
Deliv'rance can be sought—

BERTHA.

Into the talons
Of rav'nous vultures !

WOLF.

And where Hope suggests
That their defenceless innocence and pray'rs
May ope the savage warriors' steeled hearts.

BERTHA.

But the effect had surely been the same
Here in the midst of us !

WOLF.

A tear may quench a spark, but not extinguish
The raging flame. When resting from the tur-
moil

Of arms, the soldier melts at the distress
Of helpless infancy—but in th' assault
Urg'd by resistance, to revenge provok'd
By thick'ning dangers, he forgets the man,
And cleaves, transfixes, dashes out the brains
Of little wretches shrieking for his mercy.

BERTHA.

I must believe 'tis right—a woman's duty—
So we are taught, at least—is to submit.
I'll strive then to admire what wrings my heart,
Send out the children! I'm content!—Yet *all*—
Must *all* go?

WOLF.

Who can arrogate the right
To make exceptions?

BERTHA.

Who reserves but one
In eight, may still, methinks, with justice boast
A sacrifice sufficient to his country.

WOLF.

But less than his, who, having only one,
Gives up the one.

BERTHA

Drive me not with thy chilling arguments
To desperation, Wolf! Have I eight times
Endur'd a mother's pangs to die *alone*?
Who, then will close these tear-exhausted eyes?
Who drop the dew of sorrow on my grave?
Oh! burst my heart once, and then 'tis o'er!
My heart, to which maternal love is needful,
As is the air thou breathest to thy life.
In mercy, O my husband! leave me *one*—
One of my boys, t'inherit undivided
That tenderness which all of them have shar'd!

WOLF.

Bertha!

BERTHA.

One out of eight will not be miss'd!
I'll hide him—never fear!

WOLF.

Couldst thou but see
The daggers which thou plantest in my breast!

BERTHA.

Will it not be a solace to thine age,
When this unnatural fev'rish force hath left
thee,

To be a father still—to see thy boy,
Preserved by my tears—smile in thy face?
Oh! then thou'lt thank me with thy warmest
love,

For all the pains this day inflicted by me (*falling
on her knees*)

Thou'lt not deny me!—one is all I ask!
(*Overcome with the violence of her emotions, she
sinks upon the stage*)

WOLF.

Bertha!—my dearest Bertha!—be it so!

(*He raises her*)

BERTHA. (*ardently embracing him.*)

Oh thanks, thanks, thanks, for one child's life
at least

Begg'd of his father!

WOLF. (*feigning consent*)

Let us now consider

With which of them we can the best dispense,

And which we shall retain.

BERTHA. (*anxiously*)

Yes, what think you ?

WOLF.

Let Conrad go, the quiet simple Conrad !

BERTHA.

Have we not so much greater cause to love him ?

WOLF.

Joseph shall go then, he was always sullen.

BERTHA.

He sullen ! then your harshness made him so :

He ne'er was disobedient to his mother.

WOLF.

Frederic, whose whining hath so oft annoy'd us !

BERTHA.

That delicate boy yet needs a mother's care,

WOLF.

William is wild ; we can spare him.

BERTHA.

Oh husband !

Was he not like a lamb when you lay ill

And praying every hour for his poor father ?

WOLF.

Gustavus then—

BERTHA.

Rather kill me at once
Than take my darling boy, who ev'ry night
Slumbers upon my breast!
*(A pause. Bertha wrings her hands; and then
stands motionless absorbed in thought.)*

WOLF *(aside)*

How can I torture her with farther questions!
She feels herself how hard it is to chuse!
Each child, when danger threatens, is the
dearest.

(To Bertha.)

Bethink thee, Bertha, and decide—~~meanwhile~~.
I will prepare the children.

(He enters the house.)

BERTHA *(after a pause.)*

Is that the man, whose heart for fifteen years
Responsive beat to mine?—to whom I lov'd
To tell my inmost thoughts, to ope my soul,
To which his own in sympathy attun'd
Harmoniously would vibrate? Ah! alas!

What unknown horrors now estrange me from
him!

That marble heart no prayers, no tears can
move!

How he tore from me! His affection now
Partakes not as it us'd in all my griefs.

Alone I stand— all other feelings here
Are silenc'd in this one— I am a mother!
What is the State to me? what all the world?
I live but in my children!

Can a father

Aught of those thousand nameless cares conceive

Which rack a mother's bosom? For his nature
Her joys are too refined. What can he know
Of that extatic transport which she feels,
When first his eager lips her babe applies
To press the willing nipple?—what of that,
When from his ruby gum the budding tooth,
Dearer to her than pearl or orient gem,
First greets her anxious eye?—or of her bliss
When from his tongue the first articulate sound
Salutes her charmed ear?

Man's rugged breast

To such endearing sentiments is shut ;
Stern, patriotic virtue holds their place ;
And thus he can demand of me a choice
Which cracks my heart-strings ! No, it cannot
be !

Compar'd with such a trial death were mercy !
(*She is about to enter the house. Wolf meets
her at the door and clasps her in his arms*)

WOLF.

I heard thee, Bertha, and by heav'n I swear
Thou dost me wrong!—my heart is not less
scathed
Than is thine own.

BERTHA.

And I—I must confess,
Thy words no longer strike those sweet accords
Which they were wont, within this tortur'd
breast.

Accurs'd misgiving!—were it possible
That from this fond, fond heart, my love to thee,
The father of my children, I must tear,
Then were my cup of mis'ry full indeed !

*(She sinks from his arms upon a bench before
the house)*

The Burgomaster enters.

BURGOMASTER.

The public quiet is restor'd, and now
Our matrons bow them to the rigid law
Of dire necessity—deep sobs alone
From forth the open doors assail the ear:
Each in imagination hears the signal,
To them more awful than the last dread trump.

BERTHA *(tauntingly in a low tone)*

Ha! here he comes, Naumburg's chief magis-
trate,

So chosen by the citizens, who hop'd
Protection from his wisdom—that he's wise
Who can deny, when to prolong the date
Of his brief winter day, he coolly gives
The vernal years of infants? . . . Gold he never
Extorted from us—no—he is content
With scores of children's lives, that he may die
In quiet in his bed—the childless churl!

WOLF.

Cease, Bertha, cease!

BURGOMASTER.

Nay let her vent her griefs.

It is the common lot of those who rule,
That on their shoulders still is laid the charge
Of all the ills that e'er befall the State.

If Fate's stern mandates they cannot control;
If the wing'd lightnings by a magic word
They cannot charm; if unkind seasons blast
The farmers' hopes; if 'neath the boiling waves
Rich fleets are whelm'd—what boots it that
their toils,

Or prudent counsels may have sav'd the land
From Anarchy's fell gripe and foil'd rebellion—
Tis all forgot—straight on their luckless heads
Light the deep curses of their thoughtless
people.

WOLF.

Posterity at least will render justice,
And pay the debt of gratitude denied
By their unthankful fathers.

BURGOMASTER.

One doubt alone disturbs me : it is this,
Whether the little ones will find their way.

To the Bohemian chieftain's tent.

WOLF.

I'll lead them !

BERTHA. (*with horror*)

What sayst thou, Wolf ?

BURGOMASTER.

A cruel death awaits

If thither thou return'st—what could'st thou
then ?

WOLF.

Share death or mercy with the infant troop.

BURGOMASTER. (*grasping Wolf's hand*)

Well, be th' event committed to his hands
Who governs all things !

BERTHA.

So then at last thy deep design is out
Boast of thy courage, while thy coward soul
Broods o'er the plan to pluck from death its
sting

For thine own person !—For the lone despair
Of her whose fate is bound to thine thou reck'st
not.

Thou with th' unconscious victims wilt go forth,

And in the worst event fall with thy boys,
 While to the dreary walls I pour my woes,
 And ev'ry racking moment of suspense
 Endure the horrors of a thousand deaths !

Magnanimous indeed !

To shift thy portion of the cruel load
 On woman's feebler frame ! Oh ! it is plain,
 Thou know'st but how to die—not how to
 suffer !

This time thou shalt not triumph—I will go !
 I'll lead the infant troop, and though, like thee,
 I have no subtle speeches, no smooth words,
 Yet there is eloquence in woman's tears.

WOLF. (*in extreme agony*)

Heav'n grant the issue
 Prove as successful as the trial's hard !

BURGOMASTER.

Cheer up, good Bertha, infant innocence
 The savage warriors' rage will sure disarm ;
 For Nature hath on helpless loveliness
 Conferr'd a spell more potent than their
 swords.

BERTHA.

Can there be mercy in the rav'ning tiger,
 To whom the bloody banquet gives fresh gust . . .
 For human carnage ?—(*distractedly*) Ha ! see
 there !—the monsters !

See, how they whet their swords ! . . Now, now
 they seize

The struggling victims by their silken locks !
 And now they drag them with exulting yells !
 'Tis my Gustavus ! . . hold ! . . ye demons . . hold !
(As the last word dies away on her lips, she sinks senseless into the arms of Wolf, who places her upon the ground, reclining against the bench. Meanwhile the drum begins to beat. Weeping mothers arrive from all sides, some leading their infants by the hand, others carrying them in their arms. Their appearance rouses Wolf, who, with his eyes fixed on his wife, has been hitherto plunged in a profound reverie. He opens the door of his house and calls out his eight children. He makes them kneel around their insensible mother, whose drooping hand he places upon the head of the youngest. He stands for a few

moments in the attitude of prayer. The mothers, in various groups, take leave of their children, embrace them for the last time, and with averted faces motion them to go. The children assemble in the back-ground on the steps of the Town-House.—The Burgomaster waves his hand and the drum ceases. . . . he goes up to the children, and attempts to speak but is prevented by the violence of his emotion. A pause succeeds, in which nothing is heard but the sobs of the distracted mothers.

BURGOMASTER.

Go, and may all good angels be your safeguard!

(He gives the signal for departure, Wolf heads the procession, which begins to move.)

CHORUS.

Your fathers' trembling lips their blessings pour,
Your mothers' tears attend you on your way,
Your country's fate in this decisive hour
Is link'd to yours—Heav'n grant this last essay
May melt the stubborn hearts of New-Burgh's foes,
And turn our dire alarms to sweet repose!

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The camp of the Hussites on the hills before Naumburg. In the middle of the stage appears the tent of Procopius. In the fore-ground, on the left, three of his officers are reclining upon the turf and drinking together. On the right a sentinel walks to and fro. In the back-ground others of the Hussites are seen forming various groups.

A Soldier sings.

When the red falchions clash
 In combat dite ;
 In the fir'd convents' crash
 When nuns expire ;
 When childless mothers' groans
 In ev'ry street,
 And infants' dying moans
 Make music sweet ;

CHORUS.

In the bloody affray then join all ye brave bands,
 Let revenge steel your hearts, let revenge nerve your
 hands!

Second Soldier sings.

Scar'd from the couch of death
 By Horror's train,
 When the sick yield their breath
 On piles of slain :
 When tender virgins raise
 Shrieks of despair,
 And age in vain essays
 To pour the pray'rs

CHORUS.

In the bloody affray then join all ye brave bands,
 Let revenge steel your hearts, let revenge nerve your
 hands !

FIRST OFFICER.

Hold, my fine fellows hold, your song's too
 tender,

I can't endure such melting melodies.

SECOND OFFICER.

Well said ! when bloated priests broil in the
 flames,

Or children's skulls against the bloody pave-
 ment

Are dash'd, then other tones salute the ear.

FIRST OFFICER.

The sun is high—why loll we here inactive ?

Our this day's task we might ere now have
done.

Why give this respite to the Papist dogs?

THIRD OFFICER.

For their last pray'r.

SECOND OFFICER.

A needless favour, faith!

They must be damn'd at last.

FIRST OFFICER.

Plenty of work.

Is yet left for our arms here in Thuringia,

Ere we can boast us in our native land,

That Huss's death has fully been reveng'd.

SENTINEL.

Look yonder!

SECOND OFFICER.

What is't?

SENTINEL.

The valley's all in motion!

FIRST OFFICER.

The mice would scarcely venture from their
hole,

While the cat sits before it.

*(They rise, go towards the sentinel and look
down the hill)*

SECOND OFFICER.

By all the devils !

What can it be ?

FIRST OFFICER.

The valley sure enough is all alive
Just like an ant-hill. There is something too
That dazzles as the sun from snow reflected.

THIRD OFFICER.

'Tis not the glare of arms though.

SECOND OFFICER.

Wait a moment,
Till they have pass'd yon rock, round which the
path,
Winds upward : then we shall discern them
better.

FIRST OFFICER.

Look where they come !

SECOND OFFICER.

Is't magic, comrade ?

Or what seest thou ?

FIRST OFFICER.

Why, unless Satan place
Unreal visions 'fore mine eyes, they're children.

SECOND OFFICER.

So, as I live, they are !

FIRST OFFICER.

And many yet so small, as if but now
Dropp'd from their nurses' laps.

THIRD OFFICER.

The steep hill tires them.

SECOND OFFICER.

See ! the larger lend
Their hands to help the little urchins on.

FIRST OFFICER.

Aye, come ; ye here shall find a resting place,
And we will kindly ease you of the toil
Of going back.

THIRD OFFICER.

There seems to be among them
One single man.

SECOND OFFICER.

The same, if right I ken,
Who on that bootless errand came this morning.

FIRST OFFICER.

This time he will receive the due reward
Of his audacity.

SECOND OFFICER.

But see, how brisk
The little wretches tow'rd us still advance,
As though the most convenient place they
thought
To find here for their sports !

THIRD OFFICER.

'Tis droll, indeed !

FIRST OFFICER.

What can this mean ?

SECOND OFFICER.

I will acquaint the general.

FIRST OFFICER.

Procopius hath to-day received good tidings
• From far Bohemia, from his wife and children,
And in his gaiety an extra cup
He drank—which hath o'erpower'd him, and
he takes
A brief repose.

SECOND OFFICER.

I'll wake him.

(To the soldiers many of whom have successively gathered round the officers)

Ye, meanwhile

Firmly present your spears and keep them
back,

Till by our gen'ral shall the word be giv'n

For slaughter.

FIRST OFFICER.

Soldiers, do what he commands!

(He places himself at their head, and they occupy with presented spears the whole side on which the children are ascending.)

Still they come nearer, and but little seem

To care about our spears. Ho! ho! back
there!

Fall back, ye little wretches!—are ye blind?

Will ye run on the pikes? Back! back, I say!

(The children advance in a line along the whole side of the stage, with folded hands, and their eyes fixed on the Hussites, regardless of the spears of the latter. Step by step as they come



forward, the Hussites involuntarily retire to the opposite side)

It is most strange ! sure we must be bewitch'd !
Shame on you ! keep your ground !

(The Hussites recede to the other side of the stage, and are at length obliged to raise the points of their spears to avoid wounding the children.)

What pow'r unseen deprives my arm of strength !
What numbing chillness courses through my
veins !

What spell enchains us ! This must be enchant-
ment !

CHILDREN, *(quickly forming a circle round the tent of Procopius, where they fall upon their knees)*

Mercy ! mercy ! mercy !

(Wolf stands aside, in the front of the stage, in the attitude of prayer—Procopius, with hurried step, comes out of his tent. His face glows with rage. The children lift up their clasped hands to him. He stops astonished at the sight of them)

Mercy !—What may this mean ? Ha ! whose
presumption

Dares tamper with me thus?

(To the children)

Rise! Rise! I order you.

(He snatches up the two children nearest to him with violence by their arms, and angrily advances. The children attempt to cling about him, but he spurns them from him.)

Nay, nay, begone!

Twine yourselves not around me, little snakes.

Who hath contrived this?

(He discovers Wolf)

Thou here again,

Audacious man! spite of my prohibition?

WOLF *(with profound humility)*

As deputy of Naumburg, thou forbade'st me

T'appear again before thee, not as father.

PROCOPIUS.

Who taught thee, insolent, thus to interpret

My words?

WOLF.

My confidence i'th' magnanimity

Of a brave prince.

PROCOPIUS.

Thou but deceiv'st thyself,
And giv'st these infants to the fatal axe.

WOLF.

The lordly lion slays no puny foe,
He seeks but victims worthy of his strength.

PROCOPIUS.

Think ye, with flattery, with children's tears,
To cozen men? O most courageous people!

WOLF.

As for my courage—put it to the test.

PROCOPIUS.

How, if I take thee, braggart, at thy word!

WOLF.

Only spare Naumburg, and dispose of me
Even as thou wilt!

PROCOPIUS.

Say then, which are thy children;
Their blood alone shall quench my hot revenge.

WOLF. (*horror-struck, after some pause*)

If thou wilt spare the rest—why—be it so!

PROCOPIUS.

Their forfeit lives shall pay your city's ransom.

WOLF. (*shuddering*)

O Heaven ! I bow me to thy dread decree !

PROCOPIUS.

Where are the wretches, that my sword may
speed

Its destin'd task ?

WOLF.

First swear by Huss's blood

That Naumburg shall be safe.

PROCOPIUS.

Well, by the blood

Of martyr'd Huss I swear it !

WOLF.

Thou wilt grant

One favour more—let me die with my children !

PROCOPIUS.

No, thou shalt live—thou shalt but see them
suffer.

WOLF.

Thou keepst thy word, when tortures undevis'd

Thou didst denounce.

PROCOPIUS.

What ! thy heart fails thee, dastard !

WOLF.

Hath not a father's eyes betray'd his lambs?
And must he lead them to the block himself?
Nature, thou art too strong! indeed I cannot!

PROCOPIUS.

Demand'st thou oaths for make-games?

WOLF.

Who plays the cruel'st game here, thou or I?

PROCOPIUS.

Driv'ler, dar'st thou remonstrate?

WOLF.

Alas! whom shall we deem magnanimous,
If conqu'rors want that virtue? Yet bethink thee,
That thou, like us, mayst once have need of
mercy

That while thy victor sword thou here imbruest
In harmless infants' gore, thy foes perchance
May overrun thine own Bohemia's plains,
And prowl, like famish'd wolves, in search of
prey,

Ev'n to thy palace, where thy helpless babes,
As these, may lift their little hands for!

But lift in vain. With Saxon trophies rich
 When home thou hiest, crown'd with trium-
 phant wreaths,
 And find'st the bloody witness of thy loss
 Within thy desolate walls—then, prince, thou'lt
 feel
 Some portion of the pangs thou now inflictest.

PROCOPIUS.

Presumptuous! die! (*drawing his sword upon
 Wolf*)

WOLF'S CHILDREN (*all rushing from among their
 companions and surrounding him*)

Oh! father! father! father!
 (*Procopius stands motionless*)

WOLF. (*clasp ing his children in his arms in one
 group.*)

They have betray'd themselves!—thou know'st
 them now!

Not one remain'd behind! . .

A father's life was dearer than their own:

Now kill my boys, if thou'st the heart to do't.

PROCOPIUS (*furiously*)

Die, little wretches! (*He seizes one of the chil-*

dren, and looking him in the face, suddenly starts back in wild astonishment. He stoops to examine his features more closely)

How cam'st thou hither, Ferd. . . .

(aside)

O no! no, no, it cannot be my Ferdinand!

And yet so like him!

CHILD.

O, how I'll love thee,

If thou'lt not kill my father!

(throwing his arms round the neck of Procopius and kissing him)

ONE OF THE YOUNGER CHILDREN.

And so will I.

ANOTHER.

And I too.

THE ELDEST.

O, do not hurt my father!

If for our sakes thou'rt not dispos'd to mercy,

Didst thou but know how our poor mother loves

him,

Thou wouldst relent—I'm sure she would die

too,

Were he not to return with us—and then,
 Father and mother gone—poor, friendless out-
 casts,

Our only resting-place would be the grave.

Yet, if thou must have blood, I pray thee, take
 My life—I sha'n't be miss'd—but kill my
 father,

Thou killest mother, brothers, all, in him !

*(Procopius, deeply affected, slowly returns
 his sword to the sheath, and looks round, first
 at the children, who have again thrown them-
 selves upon their knees about him, and then at
 his soldiers, the ferocity of whose looks gradually
 softens into pity.)*

PROCOPIUS.

I won't dissemble, comrades ; since this heart
 First learn'd to throb, it ne'er received a shock
 So fierce as this. If then, your sentiments
 Accord with mine—if ye're inclined to mercy,
 Lower your spears.

(All the Hussites lower their spears.)

So be it !

(He cries aloud.)

Mercy! mercy! rise, be joyous!

(The children joyfully repeat the word MERCY, and crowd round Procopius, kissing his hands and embracing his knees. Moved by their artless caresses, he lifts up one after another and kisses them. Wolf meanwhile kneels in silent prayer.)

Bring bread and wine and fruit, that our young
guests

After their terrors may regale themselves!

Send our musicians too and let them play

A cheerful tune—let the whole camp be merry!

(Several Hussites hasten to obey his commands)

WOLF.

The anguish'd heart found words—in joy 'tis
dumb.

PROCOPIUS.

I feel as I had won a victory,

And yet stand here subdued by feeble children!

(Attendants bring him wine. He fills a bowl and hands it to one of the girls.)

M

Here, drink, my pretty maid, drink and be
cheery

And let the bowl right merrily go round !

WOLF. (*wiping his eyes.*)

Flow, flow, ye drops of joy !

(*The band, behind the scenes, strike up a national air.*)

PROCOPIUS.

Oh ! welcome sounds !

How ye remind me of my much-lov'd home !

Bring my camp-chair, that 'mid this happy
throng

I may enjoy myself !

(*An attendant brings the camp-chair, upon which Procopius seats himself. Other attendants enter with baskets of fruit, which they distribute among the children. Meanwhile the music is accompanied with the following song :*

Ye little strangers freely
Indulge in mirth and joy ;
And let not cruel memory
Your happiness annoy !
The sparkling bowl quaff gaily,
And share the simple treat,
Exulting in your victory,
As we in our defeat !

(During the song, the children encircle Procopius and begin to sport round him till the music ceases)

PROCOPIUS.

Good! good! ye almost make a child of me.

WOLF.

Though Vict'ry sheds her glories o'er thy host,
And binds her laurels round thy conqu'ring brow,
Say, mighty prince, if these can glad thy heart,
Like one such hour as this. The time will come,
When Peace shall lead thy war-tir'd legions
home,

And your ensanguin'd swords have rest. Per-
chance

Mem'ry may then revolve the deeds of blood
Done by thy followers. Busy Fancy too
Perchance may picture hideous, threat'ning
ghosts,

Begash'd with wounds—mothers, with broken
hearts,

In death's convulsive agonies, beside
The mangled corpses of their murder'd offspring.
May then the sweet remembrance of this day,

Banish the fearful phantoms ! may the scene
 Thou here beholdest and the joys thou shar'st
 Be feelingly renew'd !

A HUSSITE

(Entering hastily and addressing the general.)

Sir, in the valley,
 An armed force, of strange accoutrement,
 Cover'd, as it should seem, with large white
 shields,
 Is seen t' approach the hills.

PROCOPIUS.

Treachery ! treachery !

THE HUSSITE.

Sufficient reinforcements we've dispatch'd
 To our advanc'd posts to prevent surprize ;
 In a few moments we shall ascertain
 What unknown foe thus threatens us.

PROCOPIUS.

Ha ! traitor, thought ye by this mummary
 To lull our vigilance, and unawares
 To fall upon us ? *(drawing his sword)* From
 our topmost height
 We'll hurl these slaughter'd hostages upon you.

WOLF.

Hold, prince! it is not—it cannot be so.
Inform yourself—there must be some mistake.

HUSSITE.

A breathless messenger already comes
With quick pace up the hill.

SECOND HUSSITE (*enters.*)

PROCOPIUS. (*hastily*)

Who is the foe? speak, man!

SECOND HUSSITE.

A false alarm!
The women from the town in long white scarfs,
Which at a distance show'd so strangely.

WOLF.

The mothers of these children.

SECOND HUSSITE.

They're within bow-shot of our posts; so near
Indeed that we distinctly hear the sounds
Of sighs and lamentations. I have order'd
Our spearmen to obstruct their farther progress.

WOLF.

Prince! complete
The work of grace! Restore these tender objects

To their distracted mothers—peace to Naumburg!

Think that each moment of suspense must be
An age to their impatience.

PROCOPIUS.

Go! go in peace! Break branches from the trees,
And, as ye near the city, wave them high—
High o'er your heads, join in one general shout :
Victory o'er the Hussites! Victory!

Move in procession to your senate-house,
There say: Procopius, the Bohemian gen'ral,
Sends friendly greeting, and he bids me tell you,
To-morrow's early sun shall find no trace
Of his battalions on your hills—for he
Is vanquish'd by your children! . . Go in peace!
(The children kiss his hands. . he gently disengages himself from them.)

Go! ye'll unman me quite!—O my lov'd wife,
My darling babes, would I were now with you!
(He retires slowly to his tent.)

WOLF.

Bear with thee in thy bosom the conviction,
That to the mighty, conscious of his strength,

The exercise of mercy is more sweet
 Than vengeance wreak'd on a defenceless foe !
*(Martial music—The children retire two by two.
 Wolf looks on with evident delight and follows them.)*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

(An open place before the gates of Naumburg, with gentle hills on the left. Upon and about these hills, the women are seen sitting or standing in attitudes indicative of grief. On the opposite side in the fore-ground appears Bertha, absorbed in silent reverie.)

CHORUS.

Ah ! what anxious hopes and fears
 Rack the fond maternal breast !
 Better far the threat'ning spears
 Of our foes had giv'n us rest !

While the purple current steals
 Through a mother's throbbing veins,
 For her child her bosom feels
 All Affection's joys and pains.

None but that celestial pow'r,
 Who hath plac'd such passions there,
 Can, in this distressing hour,
 Lighten each sad mother's care.

BERTHA.

'Tis well for them,
Now their despair resolves to gentler sorrow;
Ere grief can vent itself in tones like these
The tortur'd bosom must more freely breathe,
To me alone hath niggard Fate denied
Community of solace, not of woe.
But why to me alone? Oh! why hath horror
Absorb'd my senses, feelings, faculties?
And why to these the kind relief of tears
Hath Nature giv'n, but to my strained eyes
Refus'd that boon?——

She is no step-dame either: all her children
Are equal objects of her fost'ring care.
Ah! she relents—and now the soothing drops
Rush to their wonted channels, and distil,
Like dews refreshing on the parched soil.

(Weeping.)

BURGOMASTER (*coming from the gate and ap-
proaching Bertha.*)

The sentry station'd in the watch-tow'r tells
That in the camp extraordinary bustle—

BERTHA. (*with horror.*)

So then, the work of slaughter is begun,

The heartless butchers ply their bloody trade!
 Kneeling upon their brothers' carcasses,
 The infants yield their throats to the fell stroke,
 And with a grin of hellish joy the murd'ers
 Brandish their glist'ning swords!

BURGOMASTER.

No! nothing of the kind! Nor sword nor
 lance
 Their dazzling glare in the sun's beams throw
 back

Upon the watchman's eye: he deem'd it rather
 A scene of merriment.

BERTHA.

Ah! very true! what need have they of arms?
 A knife were quite sufficient to dispatch
 Our whole flock of defenceless lambs—while
 we—

We feel no apprehensions for their fate—
 Oh no! and when their bleeding bodies, hurl'd
 Adown the steepy crags, roll to our feet,
 Why, then each mother, with a stoic's firmness,
 Will calmly scoop her little one a grave—
 The while some childless man looks kindly on,

Consoles her with a few unmeaning words,
And tells perhaps a prayer for their souls.

BURGOMASTER.

If it can lighten
Thy grief-oppressed heart to rail at me,
Because the greedy grave hath long since clos'd
On my last hope—rail on! misfortune's rights
Still I hold sacred—and ne'er shall reflections,
However keen, stifle within my bosom
That sympathy which others' woes demand.
In vain too would a parent's anxious care
Blight the young buds of my reviving hope.
Oft in the course of this protracted life,
When the last ray of earthly happiness
Seem'd in the gloom of black despair extinct,
Hath Heav'n a beam of consolation sent,
And turn'd my mourning into gratitude.

ONE OF THE WOMEN

*(looking stedfastly, like many of her companions,
towards the camp)*

See! see! what is it that so suddenly—
Appears in motion on the topmost hills!
Oh, for the eagle's wing to cleave the air!

Oh, for the falcon's eye to pierce the distance !
 Like white lambs skipping down the mountain's slope

Lower and lower still doth it descend !

BERTHA. (*with alarm*).

What—what is it that ye see ?

BURGOMASTER.

The ruddy dawn of Hope.

ONE OF THE WOMEN.

Now—now more plainly may it be perceiv'd !

BERTHA.

Say what ?

WOMAN.

There ! there, on the declivity !

Now they come singly ! yes, yes, it is they !

BERTHA (*with extreme anxiety*)

Who ?

WOMAN.

'Tis the children !

ALL.

Our children !

(*The Burgomaster in a transport of gratitude
 raises his clasped hands towards heaven*)

BERTHA.

O no! no! no!
Your anxious love hath but deceiv'd itself,
And spread a fond illusion 'fore your sight.
O, contradict me!

WOMAN.

Yes, 'tis they, indeed!
The elder briskly run before: the younger
Follow with slower step.

BERTHA.

But are they all there?

WOMAN.

All.

BERTHA.

Oh that these trembling limbs could mount the
height,
I'd count them with a single glance!

WOMAN.

All! all! and see — the foremost now have
reach'd
The valley.

BERTHA.

Tell me, do you see my husband?

WOMAN,

We see him.

BERTHA.

(falling on her knees and raising her hands)

Heav'n be prais'd!—he lives! they live!

WOMAN.

He carries in his arms one of the children.

BERTHA.—*(in alarm)*

Dead—I suppose?

WOMAN.

O no; the youngest.

BERTHA.

And yet why carry him? he must be sick,

Or hurt perhaps?

BURGOFFASTER.

May not so small a child

More likely be fatigued?

WOMAN

There now he stops—

He beckons to the foremost boys, and marshals

The little troop—and takes himself the lead.

Now—now—they wave green boughs above
their heads,

And like a grove the whole move onward now !
 What can this mean but peace ? yes ! we're
 deliver'd !

ALL.—(*advancing to the front of the stage.*)
 Blessed be Providence ! we are deliver'd !

THE CHILDREN.

(*whose shouts are heard at a distance*)

Victory o'er the Hussites ! Victory !
*A throng of joyful citizens come out at the gate,
 mingle among the women, share their trans-
 ports, and impatiently await the arrival of the
 children.*

WOLF.

(*rushing almost breathless upon the stage, and
 carrying his two youngest children.*) *Bertha
 opens her arms to receive him*)

There Bertha, I have brought them all safe
 back

To thy maternal arms, but the two youngest
 Are weary, let them rest upon thy bosom.

BERTHA (*clasping them in her arms*)
 My darlings !

(The other children come up waving their branches with signs of joy and exultation. Their fathers and mothers respectively single out their own, and instantly a number of different groups are formed)

WOLF. *(looking at them with deep emotion)*
What a delicious scene ! methinks from Heav'n
Well-pleas'd th' Almighty Father doth survey it.

(After a pause, he dries his eyes, collects himself, and respectfully goes up to the Burgomaster.)

Worshipful Sir, Procopius, the Bohemian,
In peace sends greeting to you, and assures,
That ere the sun renews his daily course,
His host shall leave our hills—no ransom
 wrung

From our necessity—our fields unravag'd—
Nay, not a hair shall suffer injury :
For—so he says, he's vanquish'd by our
 children.

BURGOMASTER.
Come to my heart, thou virtuous citizen,
And you—ye men of Naumburg, ne'er forget

What in the hour of deep distress ye ow'd
To this your humble townsman! From this
day,

His children to the gen'ral State belong,
And be an ample recompence bestow'd
Upon himself for his good services.
Nor shall the public gratitude stop here,
But in the mem'ry of posterity
His name shall be embalm'd.

Worcester.

O! tis too much!
For truly the success with which kind Heav'n
Hath pleas'd to crown the deed, is recompens'd
Sufficient for the risk: however flattering
The favours you propose, I need them not.
Contented with the fruits of industry,
To these my boys I've giv'n a second life,
But for my native town I have perform'd
A patriot's duty only.—All the wealth
A monarch could bestow, would not increase
My sum of happiness. Honours and fortune
Are precious boons I grant, but far less sweet
Than the delight which fills his honest breast.

Who from no sordid motive serves his country.
 No hireling I—nor for reward I've acted :
 But if to me ye think aught owing by you,
 Transfer it to my children—for myself
 I ask but love while living and respect
 When Death shall call me hence.

BURGOMASTER.

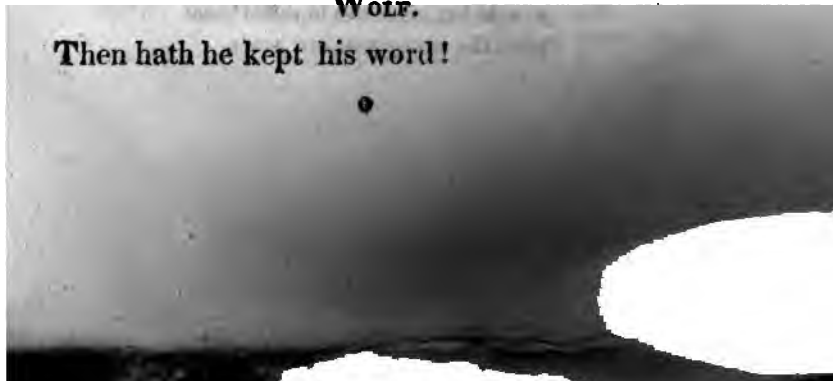
Mine be the care
 To reconcile the feelings of thy heart,
 So delicate and gen'rous, with our duty.

FIRST SENATOR—*(advancing from the gate)*
 New and strange tidings from his lofty station
 Our watch hath just announc'd. In haste the
 foe

Breaks up his camp—the fires become extinct—
 The tents have vanish'd, as autumnal leaves,
 Swept from the parent stem by northern blasts.
 The banners float—the troops are marching off,
 Their last battalions only stud the hills,
 Like ling'ring patches of December snows,
 Dissolv'd by breath of Spring.

WOLF.

Then hath he kept his word !



BURGOMASTER.

O memorable day, so gloriously
 Mark'd by Heav'n's bountiful interposition,
 Be thou distinguish'd in our calendar,
 And kept with solemn rites by future ages !
 Oft as the sun proclaimeth thy return,
 Our troop of gladsome children to the hills
 Shall lie them forth, and round the monument,
 Rais'd where Procopius' colours proudly wav'd,
 In sportive gambols mingle—while this spot,
 Water'd with mothers' tears, no trenchant
 plough

Shall e'er disturb. Returning home at eve,
 The joyous infant band, with verdant boughs,
 Shall raise th' exulting shout of *Victory!*
Victory o'er the Hussites! Victory!
 That thus the mem'ry of our stern alarms
 And great deliv'rance be transmitted down
 From sire to son till Time's remotest date.

CHORUS.

'Gainst a host of fierce invaders,
 We sent forth our infant bands,
 Nought but innocence to shield them
 From the savage warriors' hands.

Though fond mothers, broken-hearted,
Each lov'd child as lost deplor'd,
And as victims they departed,
Yet as victors they're restor'd.

(The music changes to a march, on which the people begin to move. The children, waving their boughs, open the procession; the parents follow; and last of all come the Burgomaster and Senators. While they are passing through the gate into the town, the curtain falls.)



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